



## ***NEWS RELEASE***

**Release Date:** April 1, 2003

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### ***O'Malley's Hispanic Liaison Named 2003 SBA MD Minority Business Advocate***

**Baltimore, MD**—The U.S. Small Business Administration Baltimore District Office has announced that **Jose O. Ruiz**, Mayor O'Malley's Hispanic Liaison has been named the **2003 Maryland Minority Small Business Advocate of the Year**. The award will be presented at the **19th Annual Maryland Small Business Awards Breakfast on Friday, May 9, 2003** from 7:00 a.m. –9:30 a.m. at Martin's West in Woodlawn, Maryland. This event celebrates the achievements and contributions of Maryland's outstanding entrepreneurs and small business advocates. Mr. Ruiz is one of ten winners to be awarded at the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Maryland Small Business Awards Breakfast. Other award categories include Maryland Small Business Person of the Year, Women in Business Advocate and Entrepreneurial Success of the Year.

Mr. Ruiz is being honored for his outstanding efforts to educate and advocate for small business owners by organizing business groups. Since his appointment as Hispanic Liaison in 2000, Mr. Ruiz has organized 4 day-long, bilingual workshops free to the public, has coordinated a variety of bilingual informational workshops and has provided hands-on advocacy to help business owners gain access to vital business resources.

In 2001, he organized the Baltimore's first Hispanic Roundtable. The roundtable serves to provide networking and dialogue among Hispanic business groups like the Baltimore Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Maryland Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and community organizations like Hispanic Apostolate and Assisi House to increase economic leverage in the larger market.

Mr. Ruiz has carefully researched the numerous financing programs available at the federal, state and local levels to direct area business owners to the most appropriate source of assistance to start and/or expand their businesses. "Jose was just what the little guy needed," says Mr. Nicholas Marrero co-owner of Gecko's Restaurant in Baltimore. "He was able to help us at a time when we had almost given up. Our loan process was a real priority to him. He gave 110% effort to move us through this process".

For more information on the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual MD Small Business Week Awards Breakfast, visit the event website at [www.mdsmlbizawards.org](http://www.mdsmlbizawards.org) or contact Rachel Howard by phone at 410-962-6195, ext.319 or by email at [rachel.howard@sba.gov](mailto:rachel.howard@sba.gov).